

# Welcome to Rome

*History, human genius and the hot midday sun have conspired to make Rome one of the world's most seductive and thrilling cities.*

## Artistic Grandeur

With an artistic heritage dating back to Etruscan times, Rome is one of the world's great art cities. Throughout history, it has played a starring role in the major upheavals of Western art and the results are there for all to see – amazing classical statues, stunning Renaissance frescoes, breathtaking baroque decor. Walk around the centre and even without trying you'll come across masterpieces by the greats of the artistic pantheon – sculptures by Michelangelo, paintings by Caravaggio, frescoes by Raphael and fountains by Bernini. In Rome, art is not locked away from view, it's quite literally all around you.

## Historical Legacies

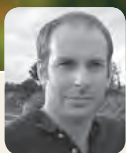
For much of its history Rome has been at the centre of world events, first, as *caput mundi* (capital of the world), the glittering hub of the vast Roman Empire, then for centuries as the seat of papal power. It was a city that counted and this is writ large on its historic streets – the Colosseum reminds of glorious imperial days, Castel Sant'Angelo testifies to violent dramas and St Peter's Basilica stands as a monument to artistic genius and papal ambition. Elsewhere, ancient ruins, buried houses and roadside shrines (*maddonnelle*) tell of past lives and local beliefs.

## Roman Feasting

A trip to Rome is as much about lapping up the lifestyle as it is gorging on art and historic sights. And there's no better way of getting into the local spirit of things than by eating and drinking well. Food and wine are central to Roman social life and the hundreds of pizzerias, trattorias, restaurants and gelaterie that crowd the city centre do as much business catering to locals as to tourists and out-of-towners. Do as the Romans do, says the proverb, and there's nothing more typically Roman than enjoying a tasty wood-fired pizza in a packed pizzeria or dining al fresco on a glorious city-centre piazza.

## Rome Capital

But there's more to Rome than history, fine art and great food. Rome is Italy's capital and largest city, and while history reverberates all around, modern life is lived to the full. Rome is Italy's political and religious heartbeat and the twin presence of government and Church dominates the city. Many city-centre *palazzi* (mansion) house government offices while over in the Vatican the dome of St Peter's Basilica lords it over the skyline, reminding everyone of the pope's presence. Political intrigue is thick in the air and as tourists tuck into their lunch politicians hunker down to hatch plots over pasta and coffee.



## Why I Love Rome

By Duncan Garwood, Author

Even after more than 10 years living in Rome I am still struck by its beauty. This is a city where the Colosseum and Pantheon, two of the most celebrated buildings in the Western world, are part of the family furniture. And it's this that I love about Rome, the juxtaposition of modern life as lived on such an amazing stage.

On a more earthy level, I also love Italian food and enjoy a good heated discussion over a bottle of local wine – a very Roman experience.

**For more about our authors see p368.**